

Bob's Blog--July 29, 2007

The days just before vacation are always busy and hectic. It seems that many of us never get everything done before its time to leave. This time is no different for me....but I know that Christine, the managers, Robert Humphrey and all the rest of you will be able to handle virtually anything that needs to be done while I am gone....so I can relax tomorrow when our plane takes off for Italy knowing that the department is in good hands. The department is doing a lot and I appreciate all the hard work that has been done over the last few months especially.

There are several topics I want to discuss in this Blog before I leave town:

1. The final DSI Strategic Plan,
2. The proposed department budget for 2008,
3. The Paint-a-thon house on Como Avenue,
4. The latest on the pigeon control project. and
5. Personal safety for all staff and inspectors.

The Strategic Plan

LeeAnn Turchin has helped us to complete the final review and updating of the DSI Strategic Plan based on input from employees, internal stakeholders, and external stakeholders. A copy of the final plan is attached, and the changes from the first draft are highlighted to give you an idea of the extent of the many changes that have been made in the last six weeks. Reading through the plan still seems a little intimidating with all the goals and objectives. Nevertheless, Phil Owens and Mark Kaisersatt (the Transition Leaders) have pointed out that a lot has already been accomplished.

I would summarize the plan as being at the 3—3—3 stage: By that I mean we have three major projects well underway:

1. The new C of O Program for one and two unit rental properties (over 1700 inspections done so far),
2. The Vacant Building Initiative (1200 vacants and counting), and
3. The skyway improvement project.

There are three projects ready for implementation in the next few weeks/months:

1. Rejuvenating the Information and Complaint program,
2. Making AMAMDA more user friendly (Inspect module) and expanding the use of Amanda to all field inspectors, and
3. Providing cross training for certain inspectors to increase efficiency.

And there are three major projects that need legislation adopted by the Mayor and City Council before we can begin implementation:

1. The expansion of the Heritage Preservation program,
2. Putting teeth into the Truth in Sale of Housing Program, and
3. Developing an Admin fine system for the Restaurant Inspection program.

Besides these “major” projects there are several smaller projects that Mark and Phil are going start in the next few days: 1) Development of a comprehensive DSI Monthly Revenue Report, 2) The consideration of a dress code for non-uniformed personnel, 3) Setting priorities for the distribution of City cars for field staff, and 4) The development of email and voice mails protocols.

Thanks to LeeAnn, Phil, Mark and all the staff in DSI for your support in the development of our Strategic Plan. As I mentioned above; implementation is already well underway, and we have a good plan for the future.

The 2008 DSI Budget

The budget process this year was tough, very tough. We met three times with the Mayor and staff from Financial Services to help fashion a proposal that will help address the tremendous deficit that the City faces. I believe that the Mayor has made some very courageous decisions that will help us get back on our feet financially in three years. It won't be easy, but the Mayor has provided strong leadership to deal with the mess that was left to him when he was elected in 2005.

In general DSI has come out very well; we will be able to add staff for the C of O program and we will be able to purchase the new software to upgrade the AMANDA system. But, we will have to tighten our belts to avoid depleting our fund balance in the License and Permit fund. And, we will need to be diligent in collecting sufficient revenues to make our revenue projections.

I'll talk more about what I mean by “belt tightening” after the Mayor presents his budget on August 14th. Don't worry, we are not going to hamstring our operations...we just need to be more conservative and deliberate in making decisions regarding spending.

Paint-a-thon Update

We made a lot of progress yesterday painting the trim of the house at 641 Como. We had 12 City volunteers (Reid Soley, Rich Jents, Karen Zacho, John Choi, Therese Skarda, David Palm, Megan Stacy, KaYing Yang, Jordan Huckleby, Nancy Homans, and Gary Hesser) along with three members of the family to help out; but there is still much more to do. Robert Humphrey is going to need your help to finish the house on August 11th. Fortunately we will be able to use rollers to do the siding, so the process should go much quicker. The Mayor is scheduled to be there on the 11th, but I don't know if that will be a help or a hindrance? I have never seen the Mayor paint.

Pigeon Control

I am happy to report that we have a building owner who has agreed to cooperate with our pigeon control demonstration. John Rupp, the owner of the Lowry Hotel and the Saint Paul Building, will provide space for the pigeon motel and will use some of the devices we are recommending

to deter pigeon roosting on the building ledges. Watch CBS news in the next two weeks....for an update on the project.

Personal Safety

Recently, Tom Ferrera encountered a resident who threatened to shoot at any City vehicles that he sees at his property in the future. Obviously, this is a very serious matter (That has been referred to the Police) but I want to use this incident to remind everyone to take a minute to reflect on the importance for all of us to be careful as we move around the City. It seems that we are encountering more and more frustrated residents...neighborhood meetings are more intense....and the problems don't seem to be lessening. Add the hot weather and we could have a recipe for tragedy...so please be careful, check AMANDA before you go to a property that you are unfamiliar with, and talk to Officers Dean Koehnen or Dave Schoen if you have any personal safety concerns.

Be careful....your safety is more important than any violation or complaint. No matter whom the complainant might be.

As always, thanks for your continued support. Stay cool and enjoy the summer weather.

Bob